

The Growing Role of Sustainable Wildlife Tourism and Indian Youth in Wildlife Conservation

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Abstract

For the benefit of future generations, the natural environment must be maintained and preserved. One of the many nations where wildlife or nature-based tourism is expanding is India. Young people need to have a bigger role in protecting nature. Wildlife parks, walks, camping, bird watching, scuba diving, and other experiences that depend on the natural environment are all possible for those who participate in nature-based tourism. These kinds of tourism are thought to be advantageous to local economies and conservation, in addition to supplying money for park management and jobs. All around the world, youth groups' programs have made sustainable development a pillar. As a result, new youth-led projects addressing issues like deforestation, disaster relief, and animal welfare are reported virtually daily. Since they will be the ones using it in the near future, everyone in society has a particular stake in maintaining the common good. Both ecologically sustainable economic growth and the sustainable use of natural resources will improve human existence. Millennials are aware that now is not the time to wait for things to happen on their own.

Keywords: Sustainable Wildlife Tourism, Indian Youth, Wildlife Conservation, Local Communities

Introduction:

What is Wild Life Tourism?

Seeing wildlife in its natural habitat is known as wildlife tourism. In the midst of the stunning plants and animals, it is a wonderful chance to get as near to nature as possible. In the majority of the world's nations, including India, wildlife tourism plays a major role in the tourism sector. It has grown dramatically and quickly on a global scale in recent years and is strongly related to eco-tourism and sustainable tourism. Furthermore, wildlife tourism is a multimillion-dollar sector that provides travelers with personalized safaris and trips. Wildlife tourism is the practice of getting up close and personal with wildlife through non-consumptive activities like taking pictures or watching animals in their natural environments. In addition to supporting ecotourism and environmental preservation, it combines aspects of adventure travel as a leisure activity.

Status of Wild Life Tourism in India:

India's wildlife tourism industry has grown at an unparalleled rate and is becoming more significant on a worldwide scale. One of the most popular wildlife locations worldwide is India. The nation boasts the best tiger reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, and bird sanctuaries. The nation's unusual wildlife, such as Asian elephants, Asiatic lions, Bengal tigers, sloth bears, Indian rhinos, leopards, and hundreds of bird species, attract tourists from all over the world.

Tourism in India:

India's travel and tourism sector has made a substantial contribution to the country's GDP. Additionally, the industry generates a large number of job opportunities. This represents the travel and tourism industry's contribution to India's GDP, according to the Ministry of Tourism's Annual Report for 2020–21.

Financial Year Tourism Contribution to GDP (%)

2020–21 1.50% (low due to COVID-19)

2021–22 1.75% (still below pre-pandemic levels)

2022–23 5.00% of GDP (returned close to pre-pandemic levels)

2023–24 (*Provisional*) ~**5.22%** of GDP (National Account Statistics estimates)

2024 (*WTTC estimate*) Around **6.4–6.6%**

Impacts of Wildlife Tourism:

- India's wilderness areas are separated into 421 Sanctuaries and 75 National Parks. Project Tiger is in charge of 19 of these. Among the most well-known "Project Tiger" wildlife reserves are Ranthambore, Bandhavgarh, and Kanha National Parks.
- Wildlife is crucial to maintaining a healthy ecology. The main cause of ecological development is the abundance of animals that are excellent predators. Wildlife is also thought to be one of the key elements influencing the growth of international trade and national revenue.
- We may use wildlife as a natural source of raw materials to start any factory, business, or enterprise.
- Unsustainable wildlife tourism is causing a number of issues in India's national parks. Animals in their native habitats may experience severe disruptions due to wildlife tourism.
- Even while it may seem harmless, the practice of offering tourist spots for authorized hunts can have an indirect detrimental impact on populations.
- There is no denying that the ecosystem and wildlife will be under more stress as tourism develops and thrives.

Contribution of Youth and Government Initiatives:

India has a greater number of young people, and it occurred to me that we should leverage their energy potential to save the environment and steer them in the right route. Wildlife tourism has become unsustainable in several Indian parks, leading to a number of issues. Increased money is required for wildlife protection. Wealthy strangers are snatching up land in some parks and purchasing real estate from locals at exorbitant prices, according to Karanth.

Karanth claims that tensions surrounding these parks will increase if local communities lack the means or expertise to establish their own facilities. India does really have an abundance of animals. The conservation of these species depends on India's parks. Uncontrolled tourism currently puts a great deal of strain on parks and park administrators, who are already dealing with a lot of difficulties.

India has been engaged on animal conservation since the early 1930s. The establishment of the well-known Jim Corbett National Park marked the beginning. In order to prevent human infringement, the Indian government has launched successful initiatives for the preservation of natural life. The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which prohibits the trade in rare and endangered animals, is one of the most notable measures. These are a few significant wildlife conservation projects that the Indian government has carried out.

Protection and Conservation:

In accordance with the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the Government of India (GOI) established protected areas for wildlife, such as National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservancies, and Community Shelters, and imposed restrictions on individuals engaged in illegal hunting. In order to replace the endangered species, the Central Government started the Coordinates Advancement of Natural Life Living Space Plot. However, it included the unused component, Restoration of Imperiled Species, which included animals such as "Hangul/Stag Deer in Jammu & Kashmir, Vultures in Punjab, Haryana, and Gujarat, Snow Panther in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Arunachal Pradesh, Swiftlet in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Sangai Deer in Manipur, Nilgiri Tahr in Tamil Nadu.

The Government of India has intensified its anti-poaching efforts and implemented a unique monitoring method. To enhance tiger preservation, the Indian government appointed a National Tiger Preservation Specialist.

The Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) is also stationed in Odisha, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. Electronic surveillance systems are used to keep an eye on the boundaries of Madhya Pradesh's Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary and Assam's Kaziranga National Park. Young people have a duty to preserve the environment. In order to safeguard animal species for future generations, wildlife preservation is extremely important. Young people's energy and creative ideas can result in improvements in the preservation of nature. In actuality, many young people have participated in government and UN initiatives, volunteered their services to wildlife conservation organizations, and participated in exercises to support the preservation of natural life. Some incredible natural life warriors, such as Valmiki Thapar, Romulus Whitaker, Uma Ramakrishnan, Purna Singh Bindra, Latika Nath, Bittu Sahgal, and K. Ullas Karanth, to name a few, have lived their entire lives working, writing, and fighting for the preservation of India's animal kingdom and promoting awareness about it.

Review of Literature:

Heesup Han, Jongsik Yu, and Wansoo Kim's 2018 study, "Youth travelers and waste reduction practices while going to tourist locations," was published in the Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing. It highlights the growing number of youth tourists worldwide. It suggests using the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine how young tourists reduce their waste. The key environmental variables are being identified by the investigation. According to the research paper on the challenge of measuring children's attitudes toward wildlife in rural India published in the International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education by Salazar, Gabby & Ramakrishna, Ishika & Satheesh, Nitya & Mills, Morena & Monroe, Martha & Karanth, Krithi. (2021), people's approaches have an impact on the nature of their interactions with wildlife and their support for conservation. Numerous environmental education initiatives aim to change kids' perspectives on the environment and wildlife. Using a variety of instruments to examine the attitudes of the children, the study discovered that frequently the youngsters were reluctant to respond, or they were afraid of wild animals, were unfamiliar with them, and attempted to imitate their classmates. According to the research's conclusion, appropriately designed instruments should be available to assess children's attitudes about animals.

Objectives:

- To examine the growth and impacts of wildlife tourism in India.
- To assess tourist-induced disturbances in protected wildlife areas.
- To analyze the role of wildlife diversity in maintaining ecosystem health.
- To study sustainable, eco-friendly tourism that supports local communities.
- To understand conservation strategies through the integration of youth innovation and experience.

Hypothesis:

H₀: The role of Indian Youth still remains unmapped as far as Wildlife Conservation is concerned in India.

H₁: The role of Indian Youth is extremely contributing towards Wildlife Conservation in India

Research Methodology:

The research methodology taken in this research paper covers both Primary and Secondary data.

Primary Data:

A sample data of 99 respondents who are the young students, was taken for the study. A questionnaire in the form of Google forms was given to the respondents and their view points were sought.

Secondary Data:

The secondary sources of information include E-resources like World Wildlife Websites, Google Search Engine, and Research Papers on Wild life Tourism, Blogs on Wildlife Tourism and Wildlife Conservation.



Source: www.mapsofindia.com

Indian Youth can be used for promoting towards Wildlife Conservation?

The following is a summary of the respondents' opinions on this question. Young people may take charge of their future and safeguard ecosystems and the environment in the following ways:

By working with environmental organizations or starting their own projects, young people can make a significant contribution to wildlife protection. Wildlife habitats can be preserved by embracing eco-friendly practices including cutting back on paper consumption, recycling garbage, using less water and electricity, and adhering to the reduce, reuse, and recycle philosophy. Youth should encourage waste minimization, appropriate segregation, and the adoption of eco-friendly products because plastic pollution seriously endangers both land and marine life. Equally crucial is responsible consumption, which lessens the strain on finite natural resources by just buying what is required. Young people can effectively use social media to raise awareness about sustainable practices and wildlife protection. Conservation efforts are further strengthened by involvement in government programs, seminars, and educational trips to national parks, animal reserves, and sanctuaries.

Important actions include avoiding sport hunting, planting trees, coordinating awareness campaigns, supporting wildlife-focused NGOs, and encouraging tree protection through campaigns. At the school and college levels, educational field trips are crucial in raising students' awareness of the value of protecting wildlife and the environment.

Conclusion

An catastrophic global environmental disaster has been brought about by the swift extinction of species. Thus, wildlife conservation—which emphasizes the study and preservation of animals and their natural habitats—has emerged as a pressing necessity. Animal-loving students can work in wildlife conservation and make a significant contribution to biodiversity preservation. Governmental entities, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, wildlife photography, environmental literature, and conservation groups all offer employment prospects in this subject. Students that receive instruction in wildlife conservation gain understanding of ecological history, environmental regulations, conservation planning, and biodiversity research. Nonetheless, a sizable portion of Indian adolescents are still ignorant of the significance of sustainable development and wildlife protection. Significant positive change can be accomplished by raising young people's awareness of the hazards to flora and fauna and directing their enthusiasm toward conservation efforts. In India, wildlife tourism is becoming a significant niche market, mostly driven by local travelers. By discouraging poaching and raising money for habitat preservation, wildlife tourism can aid conservation efforts when it is properly managed. These initiatives can be further strengthened by institutionalizing tourism for conservation by directing tourism revenue toward anti-poaching and protection measures. The study comes to the conclusion that while there has been some improvement in protecting wildlife, it is still not enough. Teaching and motivating young people to adopt eco-friendly behaviors and actively safeguard wildlife resources for future generations must receive more attention.

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